

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

Public Oversight Hearing

PARKING POLICY



**Testimony of Dan Tangherlini,
Director, Department of Transportation**

**Anthony A. Williams
Mayor**

**Committee on Public Works and the Environment
Carol Schwartz, Chairperson**

**Thursday, July 14, 2005, 1:00 PM
Council Chambers
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Good morning, Chairperson Schwartz, Councilmembers and staff. I am Dan Tangherlini, Director of the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT). I am pleased to present testimony to the Council on parking legislation and regulations that will help to improve the management of parking and the flow of traffic in the District.

DDOT, with input from multidisciplinary task forces including community, industry and institutional representatives, as well as agency representation from the local, state and federal levels, has recently completed key studies that address parking issues, downtown congestion, and curbside usage. The Mayor's Parking Task Force, Motor Carrier Management and Threat Assessment Study, the Tour Bus Initiative and the Downtown Congestion Management Task Force each recommended policies that address challenges such as the increasing demand for our limited parking supply, the location of truck routes, the adequacy of loading zones for both trucks and tour busses, among other items.

I am here to update you on the progress that has been made to date and what you can expect in the coming months.

Before I start I want to thank the men and women from my staff for their dedication and hard work, and I would also like to thank the numerous community, agency and industry representatives that volunteered their time to working through diverse challenges and points of view in helping to create solid proposals that will, in effect, improve the quality of life in the District of Columbia.

DDOT's General Counsel's office has written draft regulations or, where necessary, draft legislation for the majority of the following initiatives. Currently, the draft regulations and legislation are being reviewed by the Office of Attorney General or internally within DDOT. After review, the regulations will be published in the DC Register for public comment and the legislation will be sent to Council for your review.

RESIDENTIAL PARKING

There are estimated to be 260,000 on-street parking spaces (includes both RPP and non-RPP) and 250,000 registered vehicles in the District. This might appear to be an appropriate balance, but when you consider there are about 185,000 single occupancy vehicles entering the District daily and many areas have a much higher demand than supply, you see there is an imbalance.

There is no question that in the District of Columbia, parking demand far outstrips parking supply. DDOT has been working to address this issue of supply and demand by:

- Prioritizing parking in residential areas for residents;
- Prioritizing parking in commercial areas for retail customers to promote and facilitate commerce; and by
- Introducing demand-based management strategies.

Below, I will discuss new initiatives for enhancing our efforts in this regard.

PARKING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The current average meter rate in the District is \$0.69 per hour. This rate is

among the lowest hourly meter rates in the country and is completely insufficient to encourage parking turnover and efficient use of existing metered spaces. These meter rates do not reflect the value of the service the DC Government is providing. Furthermore, low meter rates have unintended consequences, such as encouraging some people to feed meters (decreasing turnover) while encouraging others to drive around searching for these low-priced parking spaces even when they are all occupied, thereby exacerbating congestion. Indeed, some experts estimate that up to 30 percent of traffic on urban streets is actively searching for curbside parking.

Today, it is not uncommon for people to drive to high-parking-demand areas because they know that curbside parking is cheap. However, upon arrival, they find all the meter spaces occupied. They won't find off-street spaces either because private operators cannot compete with the cheap meters. Off-street spaces that do exist are expensive – encouraging drivers to keep cruising for the rare open curbside space. This can be very frustrating. Time that should be spent shopping, eating, meeting friends, going to a movie or enjoying a museum is spent in a futile search for parking.

DDOT hired Howard University to gather parking occupancy rates and turnover ratios in key areas of the downtown and in some destination neighborhoods like Adams Morgan and Cleveland Park. Occupancy rates reflect the percentage of parking spaces occupied over a time period and turnover ratios indicate how many different vehicles park in a single space over time. Howard's data indicate that parking occupancy rates are frequently between 95 and 100 percent. This

means that people arriving in these areas are likely to spend a considerable amount of time cruising for an available parking space.

To address this inefficiency, DDOT recommends that the Council adopt performance-based parking standards. Performance standards such as occupancy rates and turnover ratios can be measured by periodic surveys. DDOT has recently contracted with the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center – research arm of the US DOT -- to assist us in determining current industry standards and procedures for performance based parking.

The Volpe Center's research indicates that an 85 percent occupancy rate for curbside parking is ideal. At this occupancy rate, curbside spaces are being well utilized – but enough empty spaces exist so that people arriving can park easily. This eliminates cruising and thereby reduces traffic congestion. Because curbside spaces cannot be managed with great precision, Volpe recommends that parking regulations and meter rates be established to generate occupancy rates in a range between 80% and 90%.

So, if the Council adopts Volpe's recommended occupancy rate of 80 to 90 percent, and surveys show that occupancy rates in an area are typically 70%, DDOT would lower parking meter rates and liberalize regulatory restrictions until occupancy rates rose to the desired level. On the other hand, if surveys indicate occupancy rates in an area were between 95% and 100%, DDOT could tighten RPP restrictions or increase meter rates until occupancy rates fell to the desired level.

Although curbside parking supply is fixed, demand varies widely by location, day of the week, and time of day. If the Council adopts a performance-based approach, DDOT can manage parking regulations and meter rates to accommodate the unique characteristics of our many neighborhoods.

In low-demand areas, meters will be cheap and parking will be available. In high-demand areas, meters will be more expensive. This will encourage some to take transit, taxis or car-pool – and they will feel good about saving money. For those who are willing to pay the parking fee, they will feel good too because they are likely to find a parking space. In these areas, higher curbside meter rates might encourage private parking providers to provide short-term off-street parking – thereby increasing the parking supply.

By tailoring regulations and meter rates to meet Council-established performance standards for occupancy, the District can improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike by ensuring a better match between parking reality and expectations.

Moving to a performance based structure would also be an effective way for the Council to respond to the Mayor's Parking Task Force recommendation to rectify current inefficiencies in curbside parking to ensure appropriate parking occupancy and turnover. Thus, objective standards could be used to establish appropriate regulations and meter rates at (1) existing curbside meters, (2) multi-space meters for visitors in RPP zones, (3) meters in loading zones, and (4)

meters for short-term curbside tour bus parking.

PROGRESSIVE FEE FOR RPP

The Mayor's Parking Task Force recommended implementing a progressive permit parking fee structure whereby each additional Residential Parking Permit (RPP) sticker per household would cost an additional amount. DDOT proposes a fee structure for implementation that would begin at \$25 dollars for the first permit issued to a household, \$50 for a second household permit, and \$100 dollars for the third permit. DDOT then recommends limiting the number of RPP permits to three per household.

To put these fees into perspective, the market cost of an off-street parking space in Adams Morgan is roughly \$35,000. The nominal increase in the RPP fee that we are recommending still doesn't come close to the market rate of a parking space. However, the higher fees should encourage households with garages to use them for parking – thereby freeing up curbside space for those who lack off-street parking.

After administrative costs are recovered from the permit fee, DDOT recommends a number of programs for which any net revenues could be dedicated. These programs range from additional parking enforcement services, something emphasized in all of our public meetings, funding for enhanced bus service, and/or dedicated funding for Metro. Based on 2004 permit numbers, this fee structure will generate close to \$865,000 after the first \$15 of the fee is used to cover administrative costs.

MULTI-SPACE METERS IN RPP AREAS

In order to manage parking in high-demand residential areas so that it is available primarily for residents, it is necessary to control visitor parking demand. Placement of multi-space parking meters in RPP zones for visitors only can accomplish this. RPP sticker holders will be exempt from payment. This will reduce parking demand and increase turnover. Such an initiative has proven to be successful in Philadelphia.

The District is assessing the viability and desirability of new parking meter technologies such as multi-space meters. Multi-space meters were successfully tested in Georgetown on M Street between November of 2002 and August of 2003 and are now operational there. The success of these new multi-space meters supports their application in additional areas, including some RPP zones that abut commercial or entertainment areas.

DDOT is moving forward on a pilot program that will be conducted by Howard University. They are already collecting the ‘before’ data necessary to analyze the results of the completed pilot. However, legislation to permit performance-based meter pricing will be required to proceed with this pilot program.

VISITOR PARKING PERMITS

Currently, District residents on streets designated as part of an RPP area may obtain visitor parking permits for free at a police station or substation in their ward. Each visitor permit is valid for 15 days, with issuance limited to two visitor permits every six months per household. The license plate number and

issuing state of the visitor's vehicle must be presented.

The Mayor's Parking Task Force suggested enhancing the existing visitor parking program rather than a complete overhaul. For example, one recommendation is to institute a pilot program to study the implementation of a fee for visitor parking passes in parking zones with particularly acute parking supply problems. The intention behind charging a fee is to begin to address the disparity between the high value of parking spaces and what is currently charged for their use.

Performance-based pricing of visitor permits will help ensure that they are used more efficiently. Additionally, the Administration will make these passes more accessible for residents via the internet and at various public buildings in addition to the police stations.

CURBSIDE PARKING FOR LOADING ZONES AND TOUR BUSES

DDOT plans to place meters in loading zones and tour bus parking areas and establish time limits for curbside parking in these designated areas.

Currently, various parking areas such as loading zones (for both freight and passengers) do not have parking meters and the resulting minimal turnover is inadequate to meet demand for short-term loading. Additionally, lack of open loading zones also causes congestion as delivery trucks and tour busses either double park so they can unload or circle throughout neighborhoods until a parking spot opens. Although it is illegal to use a loading zone for commercial

parking, this practice is prevalent.

Meters can be utilized in these instances to facilitate behaviors that will assist in the management of curbside parking. Graduated loading zone fees, successfully implemented in New York, can be used to encourage shorter stays.

DDOT has also found that commuter buses are parking in spaces intended for tour buses. The Downtown Congestion Task Force recommended further improving the management of curbside space by limiting curbside bus parking to no more than 90 minutes. Buses that need to park for longer periods should park at off-street facilities such as Union Station or RFK Stadium.

SURVEY FOR SHORT-TERM LOADING AND TOUR BUS PARKING

In areas defined by the Downtown Congestion Task Force, DDOT is working with the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to complete block-by-block surveys and develop recommendations for changes to curbside regulations.

These surveys include a thorough review of existing on-street and off-street parking and loading regulations and facilities and a needs-based discussion with the adjacent users. Providing adequate loading either off-street or on-street will be emphasized based on needs established in the Motor Carrier and Tour Bus Studies and address double parking from loading, a primary cause of congestion.

DESIGNATION OF ON-STREET PARKING INTO FIVE TYPES

Many members of the Mayor's Parking Task Force stated that the current two-

hour limits for non-residents in RPP areas are often too short for visiting, enjoying a meal, shopping, and other every-day pursuits. In addition, there was general agreement that the time periods during which the RPP program is enforced are often inadequate to meet the goal of ensuring that residents have parking when they most need it.

There was also a consensus that regulations and enforcement hours should vary depending on neighborhood characteristics. The Task Force believed that a single set of RPP regulations for all areas of the District is both ineffective and unworkable.

To address these issues, the Mayor's Parking Taskforce recommended flexible policies to be based on the land use and supply/demand characteristics of distinct neighborhoods. To help us implement performance-based parking management, DDOT will use land use and zoning data along with our operational experience to establish key neighborhood types: 1) residential areas where demand is less than supply; 2) residential areas where demand exceeds supply; 3) mixed residential/commercial areas where demand exceeds supply; 4) commercial areas; and 5) special zones where there is a transportation magnet such as the Convention Center or MCI Arena. Tailoring parking regulations, prices and enforcement according to these types of neighborhoods will help protect parking for residents with RPP stickers, while allowing short-term visitor parking with the appropriate duration and turnover for each neighborhood.

RESIDENTIAL PARKING PERMIT BOUNDARIES

Today, large RPP zones (based on wards) promote intra-ward commuting which

is contrary to the intent of RPP to protect residential parking near one's home. In response to this situation, the Mayor's Parking Task Force recommended changing the RPP boundaries to limit intra-ward commuting. No consensus was reached on what the new RPP boundaries should be, but some ideas included using smaller areas such as ANC boundaries or the Neighborhood Cluster boundaries used by the Office of Planning. Another idea was to create special zones that use tools to better balance parking in high demand areas.

DDOT has begun to test various options on a case-by-case basis and to create special zones where necessary. An example of a special zone is in the Shaw neighborhood where DDOT worked with the community to address the special situation around the Convention Center. Another example is the special parking enforcement area around RFK Stadium. This method has proven to be successful in protecting residential parking and encouraging transit use.

CONCLUSION

I've just outlined the numerous ways the District Department of Transportation has been working to improve the quality of life in the District through addressing challenging issues such as congestion, parking, and use of public space. We've made substantial progress on the recommendations outlined in each of the Task Forces and Studies and we will continue to work diligently on their implementation and follow-up.

I'd be more than happy to take any questions.